

## Activity one: Life Stories

by Maurice Jamall

**Level:** Low-intermediate and above

**Aim:** To practise conjunctions/linking (so, because, while, when, during, but, and)

**Time:** Approx: 30 minutes, excluding "Follow-up"

### Procedure:

1. Draw a couple on the board, eg Keiko and Jun. NB: Avoid using names of students in your class.

2. Put up a list of events in their relationship. For example (Col. 1):

in Col. 2 to link to the second part of the story. Perhaps give an example:

*They met while they were high school students during the summer of 1994*

4. Ss in pairs make up the story of Jun and Keiko. Encourage them to write key words only (e.g., high school students/summer, 1994) rather than whole sentences.

5. Melee: Have Ss stand up and

interesting version they heard.

### Follow-Up

Write your version of the story but as a cloze:

*They met....the summer of 1994*

*They had their first date ....they found they liked each other a lot*

*They first kissed ....they were watching Titanic*

*Jun had an affair .... Keiko was on holiday with her parents*

*Keiko had an affair....Jun did.*

And so on. As few/many as you feel appropriate. In pairs, Ss complete the sentences with one of the words from Column 2.

Ss, in pairs, then write their own version of the Keiko/Jun story taking turns to be the writer. Monitor and closely check their use of conjunctions.

NB: If short of time, this could be done as homework followed by a peer correction session the following lesson.

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2:	COLUMN 3
They met	DURING	WHILE
They had their first date	SO	BECAUSE
They first kissed	WHEN	BUT
They started dating	AND	?
Keiko bought Jun a key ring		
Jun bought Keiko a cuddly toy		
They had their first fight		
Keiko had an affair		
Jun had an affair		
They split up		
They met again		
They got married		

3. Then add Column 2 and the ?.

Put students in pairs and have them create the story of Jun and Keiko. Make sure they understand that they can use any of the words

walk around the room comparing their version of the story with other students. Don't allow any writing.

6. Ss go back to their first partner. Ss tell each other the most

## Activity two: A Tricky Situation

by Hugh Graham-Marr, Tamagawa University

**Level:** Intermediate and above

**Time:** 30 minutes or more, depending on follow-up exercises used.

### Procedure

Prepare story to tell Ss which contains a problem of some sort: eg:

Kenji lives in Tokyo. He's happy in his work but out of the blue an old friend rings him up with an offer of a job. It's more money, a more responsible position, more challenging, but in another town. His wife also works. She's happy in Tokyo and doesn't want to move.

Perhaps do this as a listening task. Ss listen and explain the situation, and check their information with a partner. Divide class in two and pair up Ss (so 20 Ss = 5 "A" pairs and 5 "B" pairs). Group A are close friends of Kenji and therefore have his best interests at heart. Group B are colleagues of Kenji, who'd like him to stay in the company, since he's a valuable employee. Have them prepare advice for Kenji.

**Roleplay:** Pair Ss up with a new part-

ner from the other group. SA is Kenji, SB is his friend/colleague. Kenji explains his dilemma. The other S gives advice/asks for more info. Ss then find a new partner and reverse roles.

**Feedback:** Ss go back to their first partner and compare advice they received.

**Follow-up:** For homework, Ss can either write up what happened or write a letter from Kenji to an advice column.

## Activity three: Consequences

by *Chris Cleary, Gakushuin University*

**Level:** Low-intermediate and above

**Aim:** To practise narrative tenses (was + ing vs past simple, past perfect)

**Time:** Approx: 20 minutes

This activity is based on the popular kids/family game, "Consequences." Put Ss into pairs and give each pair a sheet of blank A4 paper. Have them divide the page into seven sections horizontally, preferably with a ruler and pencil. Tell the Ss that they're going to create a collection of stories about different people in the class.

### Procedure:

Put the following prompts on the board:

*Which two people?*

*What was the weather like OR How were they feeling OR What had they just done?*

*Where did they go? AND how?*

*Who did they meet there?*

*What did they decide to do?*

*How was it?/Just at that moment what happened?*

*How did they feel as a result OR*

*What time did they go home?*

Teacher makes up an example story, from start to finish. NB: Don't make it too embarrassing!

Then tell the Ss that they're going to do the same but tell just one part of several stories. Ask the Ss: "Which two people?" Each pair then writes two people in the first section of the A4 page. Tell the Ss to fold their answer over so it can't be seen. Then pass the pages round so each pair has a new sheet. Now ask the second question, "How were they feeling?" How was the weather?" Again, the Ss write their answer, fold over and the sheets are passed to a new pair. Continue this until all the questions are answered.

When the final one is done, ask Ss

to unfold the sheet and read the whole story from start to finish. Then hand out more paper and have Ss write that story as a single paragraph narrative. Monitor/assist as required. Help with spelling, conjunctions, subject-verb agreement and so on. When each story has been written up, they can be displayed around the classroom walls, with student interest generated by recognition of what happened to their original starting line, and the fate of their contributions to other stories.

This kind of activity can be repeated occasionally with the same class.

This is an activity that works with any group that can deal with the simple past and past continuous, and is able to make use of the opportunity to use simple narrative conjunctions such as "then", "suddenly", "after that" or "while". There is scope for upgrading, according to level.

## Activity four: Developing a Narrative

by *Maurice Jamall*

**Level:** Elementary and above

**Time:** Minimum 30 minutes. More, depending on follow-up exercises

### Procedure

1. Draw the following on the board: a teddy bear, a hand holding some diamonds, a pair of scissors and an old lady.

2. Write the following on the board:

*a) She walked along the path until she reached the oak tree.*

*b) Her father had died when she was still a girl.*

*c) The landlord threatened to throw her onto the street.*

*d) She climbed the stairs up to the attic.*

*e) She never had to worry about money again.*

3. In pairs, Ss create a story which includes the four pictures and the events a-e. Stress that the events a-e can be included in any order.

4. Ss write the story in pairs.

Monitor/assist Ss as required.

### Follow-up

Use the Ss' work to then practise adjectives and adjective order and adverbs. Do this by first writing an example sentence on the board, for example:

*The woman lived in a cottage in the woods*

Write the following questions on the board:

*What kind of woman was she? How did she live? What kind of cottage was it? Where were the woods?*

Put Ss in pairs and have them come up with a few possibilities. You'll probably get this kind of thing: old, sad, lonely, by herself, quietly, small, pretty, near a village, by the river.

Using the Ss' answers, rewrite the sentence, so you get something like:

*The lonely old woman lived by herself in a small cottage in the woods by the river.*

Ask Ss which is the more interesting sentence to read and why. Pass the Ss' stories around the class so that each pair has a different pair's story.

Have them read it and write a few questions that they would like answered, rather like the ones you wrote. Monitor/assist as required. NB: You'll probably need to help Ss with a few hints as to what they could ask questions about before they feel confident to go it alone. The story is then returned to the writers who rewrite their story including the extra information demanded by the question prompts. Monitor/assist as required. Put the finished versions on the walls around the class. Ss then go around the room and the different versions.